

Jordan Loewen-Colón ([00:00:08](#)):

Hello and welcome to the Mapping the Doctrine of Discovery podcast. The producers of this podcast would like to acknowledge with respect, the Onondaga Nation, Fire Keepers of the Haudenosaunee, the Indigenous peoples on whose ancestral lands Syracuse University now stands. And now, introducing your host, Philip Arnold and Sandra Bigtree.

Philip P. Arnold ([00:00:31](#)):

Welcome everyone to Mapping the Doctrine of Discovery. I'm Phil Arnold, professor in the Department of Religion and core faculty in Native American Indigenous Studies at Syracuse University, the founding director of the Ska-nonh Great Law of Peace Center, and board member of Indigenous Values Initiative.

Sandy Bigtree ([00:00:51](#)):

And I'm Sandy Bigtree, a citizen of the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne. I'm on the board as well of the Indigenous Values Initiative and was part of the founding collaborative of the Ska-nonh Great Law of Peace Center.

Philip P. Arnold ([00:01:06](#)):

And this podcast is brought to you by the Henry Luce Foundation, and we're coming to you from Onondaga Nation territory. Our guest tonight is Tina Ngata coming to us all the way from New Zealand. And Tina, I want you to introduce yourself, but I also want to you to introduce our listeners to your name for what we call New Zealand.

Tina Ngata ([00:01:35](#)):

Sure. My name is Tina Ngata. I am Ngati Porou is the name of my nation and we hail from the East Cape of Te Ika a Maui, the colonizer name of which is the North Island of Aotearoa, is the name of our nation of our country. And the colonizer name for that is New Zealand. Aotearoa means the long white cloud. Yeah, so that's me. I live here on our ancestral land, which has been held by our land, sorry, my own lands which have been held by our family and our nation for time immemorial. And I work largely in COVID response, and my other area that I work in is anti-racism with a specific focus on anti-colonial racism and imperialism. And of course this also includes a lot of work around the Doctrine of Discovery. So, really honored to be here with you all to be able to contribute to the discussion, and very thankful for all of the work that you've done which we've utilized over in Aotearoa here as well.

Philip P. Arnold ([00:03:02](#)):

Thank you.

Sandy Bigtree ([00:03:02](#)):

Thank you.

Philip P. Arnold ([00:03:04](#)):

Maybe most of our guests have been from Turtle Island, from North, South, Central America. Can you talk about, from your perspective, how do you define the Doctrine of Christian Discovery? How does it affect you today? What do you see as the really critical elements in Aotearoa?

Tina Ngata ([00:03:35](#)):

Sure. The way that I've approached the Doctrine of Discovery, there's two defining elements for it. One is that it's an international legal principle, and it has come to determine particularly international relations. And when I say international, I mean between my nation as Ngāti Porou, and other nations as well as nation states as they've been defined by colonizers. And so, it's an international legal concept that started off and was incepted with a series of papal bulls. But throughout time, and I think this is a really important thing to understand, throughout time, it has become entrenched within the larger social psyche. And by the social psyche, I mean the implicit and explicit rules that influence how we relate to each other and how we perceive our roles within society and our roles in relation to each other. The explicit roles, of course, are represented by legislature and laws and policies.

(00:04:58):

And some of the implicit rules are in social contracts around what we deem to be acceptable, and what we deem to be heroic, and what we deem to be unacceptable. And some of those things are influenced through education, through media, and just established norms as well. And so, the Doctrine of Discovery, while it started off as a series of papal bulls, which collectively had a particular impact and intention to aid in European imperial expansion, over time embedded themselves within the social psyche and became powerful influences across many spaces. And a lot of that happened through, as I mentioned, education, but also intellectualism as well. And these are a lot of the spaces that I work in to try and, one, expose it, and then two, dismantle its impacts.

Sandy Bigtree (00:06:03):

Well, up here we deal with primary texts and the first recorded histories written by the Jesuits who came in the early 17th century. And in the Jesuit relations, they talk about within 30 years they transform the matriarchy into the patriarchy. And women were deemed the fire brands of hell in relations, and they were targeted first and foremost. So, this social psyche goes right to the very core of our own identity in Christian indoctrination on who we are as human beings on this earth. I was reading about this, couples were forced to marry, and the women were forced to accept the vow of obedience to the male.

(00:07:02):

They're talking about this 30 years into this process, but already all these people had Christian names. And in the books, nowhere is it written really where their Indian names, their clan names were being used. It's like right from the moment of contact, they knew how to dismantle the culture right from the inside. And although they say they never came with weapons, they came with penance, punishing individuals, withholding shelter, withholding food. These are the very basic fundamental attacks right from the beginning.

Tina Ngata (00:07:56):

Sorry. Yeah, absolutely. If you have a look at particularly the text from some of those early documents, like *Requerimiento*, it talks very clearly about submitting to the yoke of the cross and the crown. In the early stages when the Doctrine of Discovery and these papal bulls were developed, of course the separation of church and state had not yet been advanced. And so, the two things were one. You saw it in the text *Requerimiento* that they made commitments which were along the lines of, if you do not submit to the yoke of the cross and the crown, if you do not accept our Christian God as the God, if you do not submit yourselves as our servants or submit to the monarch, then we will take your women, and we will take your children, and we will do unto them such mischief as we may.

(00:09:07):

And so, this was something that was read out obviously to people who didn't even understand the language in which it was being read. It was often read out before they even saw land, so it wasn't even within earshot. It was a basic technicality that sometimes they stood on the deck of their ship and read out from a distance. But deeply religious and very explicit in its intention to do harm to women and children, which in that indicates a level of appreciation for just how fundamentally destructive it was to a society to attack these two very sacred aspects of the primary unit of the family unit of a community, that being women and children within.

(00:10:04):

As much as I struggle with people talking about moral war or the ethics of warfare, but in many cases it's accepted that women and children should be sheltered in those days and in the earlier days that women and children should be sheltered, and that warfare was the business of soldiers. And they were very clear that not just women soldiers, woman warriors to the side, that the most vulnerable members of the community were not out of bounds, and in fact nothing was out of bounds in that space. The other thing to remember when we consider that is that particularly when we look at the full name, the Doctrine of Christian Discovery, is the role of desanctification, the role of defiling, the role of making something not sacred. Because when you make it not sacred, it becomes consumable. You're able to turn it into a consumable.

(00:11:18):

The way I've seen the Doctrine of Discovery also, it's that it's always been an economic project, an opportunist economic project. It used the most powerful validating force, which at the time was religion. And so, when you make something less sacred, you can turn it into a consumable, you can enslave it, you can turn it into something for your profit. And we see that language, the use of the term profit as early as in *Romanus Pontifex*. It talks about committing people to perpetual servitude or perpetual slavery for his or her use and profit. And the exploitation and extraction from Indigenous lands, waters and bodies, and over time mines, has really been a driver of the Doctrine of Discovery. And the desanctification, making people less sacred, making people consumable, making people your property, is a fundamental step in that process.

Sandy Bigtree (00:12:32):

And that's what brings it right into the present, because we're under that system. Everybody is living on the earth today. They fall under, accept that domination and authority that is hierarchically above them, and they feel they have to obey this higher order.

Tina Ngata (00:12:57):

That's right.

Sandy Bigtree (00:12:58):

Which separates us from being part of this great mystery and regenerative life force.

Tina Ngata (00:13:10):

That's right. You look up to the sky for the Christian God sitting on His throne in a cloud in order to be closer to them and further away from our mother underneath our feet. And so, it's a way of disconnecting us also from our connection to Papatūānuku, our Mother Earth as well. And looking at this, even just looking at it as a hierarchy rather than a family tree, which is how we look at it. We call it the Whakapapa, which is a genealogical web of connection to all creatures on this planet, and also not

just to all creatures, but to the ocean, to the trees, to everything on the planet, to rocks as well. We have these genealogical connections right throughout the planet. And so, you contrast that with the Christian dogma of the time, which was the great chain of being where you had an old man with a big beard on a throne, usually with a chair on his lap and surrounded by arc angels underneath, which are regular angels.

(00:14:32):

They even had two layers for the angels alone. And then underneath that, the monarchs of Europe, and then underneath that, the peasantry. And then there were, I believe they had fish and birds and mammals, and then underneath that, trees and rocks, and then underneath that, demons and the Devil and hell. And Indigenous peoples, well non-European peoples generally were within those lower levels, if not hell, then at best mammals or animals as well throughout the experience of the Doctrine of Discovery. That's still at play today. For people to say that the separation of church and state mean that there's no longer any relevance for the church in this discussion, I don't know how it is for you, but the church opens our government every year, and the church holds still now vast tracks of stolen Māori land and millions and millions of dollars' worth of assets that it accrued through this process of colonization that it still retains today.

(00:15:55):

It holds, of course, a seat at the United Nations. The Holy See has a seat at the United Nations, and it has distinct audience with our Prime Minister. It holds a regular distinct audience with our Prime Minister, church leaders do, and I know that that's the case in many other places as well. And so, they still hold quite a significant amount of influence, as well as still retaining the legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery as well. And there's definitely a reckoning for many of them to take, and some of them have started that pathway. I've had some very profound discussions with some church leaders who are reckoning with their own history and the Doctrine of Discovery, and that's fantastic, but by and large it's not being done. Often what happens is that they will try and distract from that reckoning with other arguments.

Philip P. Arnold (00:16:54):

Right. No, what you're indicating here to me is the incredible violence that we're surrounded with on a kind of daily basis that goes without comment. Just living in a consumer society, who speaks for those living beings? That this is an old kind of sentiment for the Haudenosaunee. Who speaks for the eagles? Who speaks for the buffalo, for the trees? And so, this kind of consumerist violence is almost, it really can't be identified and can't be acknowledged on a day to day basis. But going back to something that Sandy was bringing up, I think too, something that you've been working on too is violence against women that is going on today, particularly Indigenous women around the world. Somewhere on that great chain of being around where maybe just above animals or something like that, are women and probably people of color. Talk to us about how the Doctrine of Discovery becomes one of those building blocks in violence against Indigenous women, and how you are trying to address it, connecting those dots if you can.

Tina Ngata (00:18:28):

Sure. A number of years ago, and I'll want to give a shout out to some of my sisters that I've shared this discussion with, including Betty Lyons, and Beverly Jacobs, and our sister Sandra Creamer as well, and Dawn Martin Hill. Quite a few years ago actually, we held an event in New York during the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues on the Doctrine of Discovery and its impact upon Indigenous women as well. And here in Aotearoa, we have just been working through the Te Tiriti o Waitangi Tribunal, which is

our treaty tribunal, our nationwide treaty tribunal. They investigate violations of our treaty [inaudible 00:19:23]. The hearings that you generally have, there's more or less two kinds of hearings that you have in relation to that, and one is hearings for historical grievances against Iwi against nations, and that will include land theft and all sorts of abuse through the colonial project that have happened to nations.

(00:19:48):

The other types of hearings that you hear are what we call Kaupapa. That is about particular issues where the treaty articles and provisions of the treaty have been violated by the Crown. And so, the work that I've been doing very recently has been, I was invited to provide evidence to the tribunal around the violations in relation to Whanie, Maori women, as a part of the Mana Wāhine tribunal claim, which is a claim in relation to those, the violations of the treaty for Māori woman. The area that I was asked to give evidence to was in relation to the Doctrine of Discovery. That was to really compare, the claims happen in stages. The first stage is the [Māori concept 00:20:49] hearings, and the [Māori concept 00:20:50] hearings are purely to discuss what life was like before the signing of the treaty. And then, the next stage of the hearings are the impact hearings, which is after the signing of [Māori concept 00:21:05] and the violations then happened. How did that impact upon [Māori concept 00:21:12] Maori and Maori in general?

(00:21:13):

And so, I was invited to speak particularly to the reality before the signing of Waitangi Tribunal in relation to the Doctrine of Discovery. And to do that, I compared colonial treatment of European women over those centuries, and compared that to how women featured in Māori society over the centuries leading up to the signing of Waitangi in 1840. And so, that was a few weeks ago now that the hearings took place. The evidence that I gave was along the lines of what we've already discussed around the way in which women were already recognized as being a fundamental building block of Māori society. And so, it was identified very early and also observed overseas that when you target women, when you target women, that that is a fast track to dismantling an Indigenous community. And so, it was talking about, yes, we can talk about the impacts, but it's really important to talk about the intent.

(00:22:37):

And so, I demonstrated that there was a clear present intent on behalf of the colonizers to target women as a part of the colonial project. For us, where I am in my nation, we are often described as a matrilineal culture. Women were definitely the dominant landholders, and land was passed down through female lines more often than not. All of our meeting houses, nearly, the majority of our meeting houses are named after women. If the meeting houses are not named after women, then the dining halls attached to them are, or the marae, the meeting space in front, very important ceremonial space will be named after our woman ancestor of ours. We were leaders, we were ocean navigators, we were military strategists, and horticulturalists, and economists.

(00:23:44):

We held our own schools as well at a time when in Europe it was not legal for women to attend school. We ran our own schools of learning, of sacred learning. We were also Tohung, spiritual leaders, priests I guess would be the term as well, where that was not allowed. And so, when colonizers arrived here, it was such a stark contrast to their reality, and they understood that that was definitely something that needed to change both in the interests of assimilation, but also to destabilize the Indigenous communities that they were coming across here in Aotearoa.

Sandy Bigtree (00:24:34):

10,000 years ago or so, the Haudenosaunee had fallen away from their duties and responsibilities and maintaining this balance in the natural world. They came and fell under warfare and it was extremely violent. That's when the peacemaker came to Onondaga Lake here in Haudenosaunee territory among the Onondaga Nation specifically. And when he arrived, the first person he encountered was a woman. She was targeted in this sense to help bring and restore balance back among the people. And her responsibility, the woman he came upon, she had a lodge and she would feed all the soldiers because her family was divided. She loved both sides, because even though they were fighting against one another, she was related to them and still loved them. She would feed them and provide lodging, and the peacemaker told her, This is not going to help. You have a very big heart and I know you're dedicated to do something, so this is what you need do."

[\(00:25:50\)](#):

That was to follow his instructions and gather a certain number of women and follow the protocol of the Peacemaker. They had to go live in the forests. In time certain animals would appear to each woman and that would mark her new clan identity. And so, this reestablished balance among the Haudenosaunee because of this special reconnection with the natural world. And then through this process, it would be the women who would then select their Hoyane, which is not a hierarchical chief. A Hoyane is a man of the good mind. And because the women raised these children, she knew these children from birth who could respect such a title.

[\(00:26:39\)](#):

So, it did start with the women, and then it moved on to Hiawatha, where grief was acknowledged, because in warfare there's a lot of grief. The absolution of grief became a major tenet of restoring this piece as well. But then, the Jesuits come and just target these women who were the toughest women they had encountered. They were not going to relinquish who they were to a Christian God. It took them 30 years to try to tame them. They never did fully, obviously, because we're still fighting. But it's interesting, the colonists knew exactly they had to target the women. They bring all life into this earth, all human life come through the women. It is a matrilineal line.

Tina Ngata [\(00:27:42\)](#):

Yes, it absolutely is. I was just discussing with one of my relations the other day around how there's writings from colonizers. One thing I'm thankful for for them is that at least they wrote a lot. I think when they wrote, they wrote about the things that they found acceptable at the time. Of course, they didn't foresee that in the future it would come to be deeply unacceptable. But at the time at least they were open about the things that they were thinking. And so, one of the things that I'm referring to was that they wrote about how important it is to utilize Maori women to sow the seeds of colonization within communities as well. Boy was that a bad call, because Maori, [inaudible 00:28:41] Maori have been at the forefront of colonial resistance. And so, that was a real missed call that they thought that they could utilize, focus for a short while, focus on Maori women as being the ones who would sell colonization to the broader community.

[\(00:29:01\)](#):

But they really did have an understanding of our power in that space, but also our sacredness in that space. And I think I used the term vulnerability earlier before, it's possibly not the best term to use, probably the better term to use is sacredness, that you attack the most sacred and sacrosanct parts of a community. And really, nothing was sacred to the colonizers, nothing was sacrosanct to the colonizers. And we've seen that play out both through horrible residential schools, and uplifts and theft of Indigenous children all around the world as well. And so, definitely it's been a part of, and they

understand them, they understand their sacredness, they understand their importance and that's why they targeted them.

Sandy Bigtree ([00:30:02](#)):

It's ironic, the Jesuits come in and they're like preaching that the blood of martyrs are the seeds of change. They're not actual seeds, mind you, they're ideological seeds. They take the language or these concepts and use them to dominate. It's interesting.

Philip P. Arnold ([00:30:28](#)):

It's very similar in many ways to your situation in Aotearoa. What I'd like to do is switch gears a little bit, because you wrote this brilliant piece, and I want to highlight this for a minute because... Yeah, go ahead. Sorry.

Tina Ngata ([00:30:50](#)):

Sorry. Before we do switch gear, you just said something around the fact that it's very similar, and there's a reason why it's very similar. We took from the playbook that was utilized on your land. James Cook, who incepted colonialism, served under Field Marshall Jeffery Amherst. Amherst was Cook's mentor during the Seven Year War. He learned about germ warfare, and Joseph Banks who accompanied Cook on the endeavor when they invaded here and called it Discovery. He also was a part of the Seven Year War over in Canada, and they were actually called back from the St. Lawrence River where they had been handing out infected kerchiefs and infecting local Mohawk communities. They were called back from there to man the endeavor and bring it out across the Pacific. And of course, some of our judges drew from *Johnson v. M'Intosh* to set precedence and said there was a transplanting of jurisprudence in relation to the Doctrine of Discovery here. We actually, we were big note swappers, which is why there was so much correlation between our experiences. I wanted to say that because I think it's something that unites us as well in our struggles when we talk about these connections.

Philip P. Arnold ([00:32:26](#)):

I'll add to that a little bit too because these issues are not just 200, 300, 400 plus year old crazy religion talk, or some kind of concept that was born in the minds of these rabid colonists at a certain time in history. These are very much with us now and they should be addressed. Of course, they're being addressed by Indigenous people, that the urgency of that is right in your communities, in the communities that we deal with regularly. But also non-Native allies will say, non-Indigenous allies and whatever that means, I'm one of those, then it's important that we be engaged in this work as well.

([00:33:27](#)):

We call this the Two Row Wampum methodology, that essentially we have our own work in our own lanes, you could say, or in our own vessels that need be coordinated in some way. Because just to put, I can say this because I'm a white person, white people don't know about this legacy that they embody on a daily basis, and they don't really appreciate the urgency of it. The urgency that is connected to climate change, is connected to the overthrow of our government, or all kinds of issues that we're currently involved with right now on the ground.

([00:34:21](#)):

As you were speaking before, when you introduce these ideas to non-Indigenous students of the Doctrine of Discovery as well... Now, the Indigenous students come in to the class, they already know about it. They've heard about it, they know about it. But non-Indigenous students, we'll say settler

colonial students, when they hear about it, it kind of focuses and helps them understand the problem, a foundational element of the problem they might be feeling in some way, but don't really have the language for it, because they don't have that connection, that immediate connection in their own community. I just wanted to mention that as well, because when you talk about the legacy moving around the world, and this is part of the issue we're dealing with as well in this podcast, is how do we grapple with this global phenomenon that has manifestations in very different ways, but it is a similar kind of foundation? We also need to bring along these other non-Indigenous settler colonial allies in some ways.

Tina Ngata ([00:35:43](#)):

Absolutely. As you've stated, this extends into existential issues for everybody on the planet Earth, and it's important that we do that so that people understand you are not just doing this to do Indigenous peoples a favor. These are deep existential issues that will impact the futures of everybody on the planet. Have a look at the way in which corporate behavior and almost what you would call the Doctrine of Discovery, the corporate Doctrine of Discovery, again, it takes its playbook from imperial corporate behavior as well. That foundational imperative of profit that's embedded within *Romanus Pontifex* and has continued to be a core theme throughout time. That's lasted and still lasts today, which is when you come down to it, the economy continues to be the main confounder of Indigenous justice today.

([00:36:52](#)):

Why can't we get Indigenous land back? It would cause economic instability, is generally what it comes back to as well. A lot of the abuse of Indigenous rights usually comes down to economic drivers. Even the power grabs, the power grabs usually are there in order to serve a particular ends, and those ends are generally economic ends. Which is why I say, the Doctrine of Discovery has always been an economic project. It was always about channeling wealth from Indigenous lands, waters, and bodies and minds for the benefit of European nations. But also, now for the benefit of Europeans who sit at the apex of the racial hierarchy or the power hierarchy as well.

([00:37:49](#)):

The other thing to remember is that when you look at that great chain of being as being almost like a scaffolding for that hierarchy of power, you look at where women sit within it relative to other groups, but also you look at how class features into it as well. The people who are ultimately serviced by this hierarchy of power is actually a very small percentage of white people. It's the elite, it's the cis hetero, fully abled, neurally normative, all of the things that go into making somebody the most privileged that sit at the apex. And so, challenging this power hierarchy that has been put in place through the Doctrine of Discovery is something that also holds benefits for all races, acknowledging that race is a construct, but for all races, for all ethnicities, for all peoples as well.

Sandy Bigtree ([00:38:59](#)):

Right from the onset, there were great orders from the Americas that would travel to Europe and critique their social structures. You expect us to accept Christianity when we have no hierarchy. You're all under some kind of domination of your God or your king or monarch. We don't have that. We live freely. There are some scholars today that are attributing the whole enlightenment era to these Indigenous orders that went to Europe talking about equity and freedom, because no one was having those discussions back then. They were talking about equality in the sense that you were equal under the domination of your king or under your God, but it was not a society, an equitable society. That was

something unique in the Americas when they arrived here, and it really got a lot of philosophers talking in Europe because they had never seen it in action before.

Tina Ngata ([00:40:08](#)):

Yes, and still racism being as an insidious as it is, and supremacy, and also greed and self-interest being as powerful as it is, it really didn't take long for many of those architects and philosophers to use intellectualism throughout the Age of Enlightenment to service again the imperial expansion of Europe. And you look at, for instance, Descartes who believed that non-Europeans... And we learn about many of these philosophers still today if I was to study social sciences, I'd learn about Descartes, I would learn about Locke, I would learn about Voltaire, I'd learn about their philosophies and how fundamental they are to my career. What I don't learn is that many of them were slave owners, many of them also held stolen Indigenous land. Many of them carried out research like how to whip an African best but not completely kill him, but strip him of his skin.

([00:41:21](#)):

Many of them carried out horrible racist research, and ultimately research and advanced theories that were just really in service of validating and legitimizing the ongoing imperial project, which many of them also had investments in as well. It's a huge area for us to delve into, and a lot of the work that I do now within the sciences. I do a lot of work with science and research units and institutions, and we discuss, this is what you learned in university, but did you also know about this other side of that story as well? Particularly because the self-serving policies and the self-serving laws of colonial governments has often come from self-serving science of racist and imperial scholars, implicit or explicitly racist and self-serving science based on a whole lot of racist and self-serving assumptions. They call it evidence-based. Actually, that whole system of academia and intellectualism needs to be critiqued. I'm not saying it needs to be thrown out, but it needs to be critiqued for its roots in imperialism as well.

Philip P. Arnold ([00:42:46](#)):

That's a really important point. I think other people, a lot of Indigenous people are moving into that, the scientific methodology and its racist roots. I mean that's happening for, I'm thinking of Robin Kimmerer for example, and traditional ecological knowledge and scientific ecological knowledge and trying to put them in some kind of dialogue with one another. But you always end up that one dominates. Science always dominates this Indigenous practice. This is a whole other conversation in a way, but it's really important. I'm so glad you're into that now.

Sandy Bigtree ([00:43:30](#)):

But then like you often do, you then compare it also to individual salvation. That's where it goes back to the major religions, where it becomes individualized through your personal salvation, and that becomes most urgent for your soul to be released after you die. And so, it's another way of separating humanity from the natural world and that integrative regenerative force that we're part of. We're not to ascend it. Those go hand in hand.

Tina Ngata ([00:44:12](#)):

The Doctrine of Discovery, it's an easy discussion in relation to science when you just look at the languaging of science and scientific discovery. In the same way in which they carried out geographic discovery of lands that were not lost to us in the first place, you often see them discovering new pieces of knowledge or information that were also not lost to us, that we have always known to be the case.

But now, it becomes legitimized, now because it gets published in a white academic journal, it becomes legitimized and it can be utilized in different ways. But importantly, these things have direct lines to policy and legislation as well. And so, if research and evaluation are important parts of the policy and legislation cycle, and so it's an urgent discussion for us in relation to the Doctrine of Discovery around the way in which it has infiltrated policy and evaluation cycles through research and science.

Philip P. Arnold ([00:45:29](#)):

That's great. I do want to get to this brilliant piece that you wrote. I want to contextualize it a bit, because while our discussions around the Doctrine of Discovery tend to focus on the 1450s, 1493 of course, and we just posted a new translation of *Inter Caetera* from 1493, which we've been working on. That's one of the things we're trying to do is retranslate some of these primary texts and examine them from more of an Indigenous perspective. Many of these translations have been done 150 years ago by church historians essentially. We're trying to take a new look. Some things can pop out of these texts. But one of the nuggets that you were able to help fill in for us is *Sublimis Deus*, which is 1537 I think, something like that. I think you introduce it saying that old chestnut, something that this is all often rolled out as proof that the Vatican had sworn off of this kind of colonization project of the 15th century and the 16th century.

([00:47:07](#)):

They were playing nice with everyone else. Steve Newcomb of course has addressed this in various ways. But I thought your piece really bailed down some new information about that. I thought it was brilliantly laid out. I wondered if you could walk us through that. Because as I understand it, even though *Sublimis Deus* was an attempt by some sort of activist priests in Mexico at the time to try to push back against the abuses of colonialism. It was very short-lived, a year, and probably the die had already been cast by that point. As Steve points out, we're 40 years, 45 years into the colonization project and everything is already kind of set. I wonder if you could just walk us through that, because you have revealed these texts in a way that I find really, really important.

Tina Ngata ([00:48:15](#)):

Sure. Huge Tēnā koe also to Steven T. Newcomb, the work that he does. He's so generous with his work and he's such an important voice in this space. It is really important to consider the context, the time and the context within which these documents came to be. And many of your listeners might be familiar with the Franciscan monk Bartolomé de las Casas, who was called the champion of Indigenous peoples of course, and wrote his journals which are often poured over by Doctrine of Discovery scholars, and provide a firsthand testimony of the atrocities that were visited upon Indigenous peoples. Particularly, I know he was on the third voyage, third of Columbus's voyages as well, but also... Actually, he wasn't in... Excuse me if I don't pronounce this properly, but he was a part of the *encomienda*. I'm terrible at the pronunciation.

([00:49:37](#)):

But there was the system that was set in place *encomienda*, I think it was called, the *encomienda* system set in place to reward colonizing invaders with lands, but also Native peoples to work those lands, so they were often enslaved as well. It was at force and it was very violent, Bartolomé de las Casas was a part of that system for a little while, and then rejected it and started to try and push more for, actually we should be looking to convert them to Christ, not to wage war upon them and enslave them and dispossess them. He was one of the people who in this journey of his, where he was trying to... And this is within a context of its own of course. I'm mindful that he himself also held Native slaves at the

beginning and also didn't believe in our ability to be able to hold onto our Indigenous faith as well, that we should still be converted. But Bartolomé de las Casas lobbied essentially for us, for Indigenous peoples to not be enslaved, to not be dispossessed, to not have war waged upon us.

(00:50:57):

And when he did that, that was really what was the context for the development of *Sublimis Deus*. *Sublimis Deus*, the general gist of it is that you should not be dispossessing these people. It did still hold within *Sublimis Deus* the imperative to convert, but it did say if they're not converted yet, you cannot enslave them and you cannot dispossess them. And so, that was a success for them at the time. This is a document that's often raised, I've heard it raised by the Catholic church before and by other churches as well to try and shut down the argument for repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, or rescinding the Doctrine of Discovery if you're talking about the Vatican.

(00:51:53):

And so, alongside *Sublimis Deus* came almost like an administrative document as well, which was *Pastorale Officium*. And *Pastorale Officium* basically said, we have issued this paper or this decree, this papal decree of *Sublimis Deus*, and here's the administration, here's how the administration of it will work out. If there is anybody over in the Americas who is partaking in these activities, that they would be excommunicated from the church and that their activities would be null and void. Now if we look at that time, who did we have over there? We had Hernán Cortés in Mexico who already held numerous silver mines and numerous resources and lands and people serving him, Native peoples serving him that have been set up under that system, under the *encomienda* system. There we go. I'm getting my mouth around it now.

(00:53:01):

You also had Pizarro as well invading Peru. You had de Salazar as well over in Paraguay, and many of them were carrying out the directives of the Doctrine of Discovery, of the previous papal bulls, which was to view Indigenous peoples as enemies of Christ and to wage war upon them, and to enslave them, and to dispossess them, and to turn them to your servitude, for your use and profit, and all of their belongings as well for your use and profit. They were carrying that out, and they complained and lobbied, aggressively lobbied against *Sublimis Deus* and of course the administrative document that went with it, *Pastorale Officium*. They were very offended by it. And so, they lobbied Charles V, who was both the King of Spain and the Holy Emperor of Rome, to say, "Look, we're already in here, we're already doing this." And as Steve points out, we're already 40 years into this project, you can't just shut it down now.

(00:54:12):

It's really important that we look at it in that sense, that this was really about for them, this was about defending the colonial project, the imperial project that had already been set in train. They saw these tasks that were being ruled against as being fundamental to the carrying out, the enslavement, and the dispossession, and the harm, and the acts of war were fundamental to them. And so, they opposed being told, and this is what we can break the argument down to, which is Bartolomé de las Casas saying, no, the project of converting people to Christ can continue, which I don't agree with that either. But the project of that can continue, but it can continue without dispossession, without murder, without targeting women and children, and without the dispossession. And the argument back on that was, no, we need to do these things.

Jordan Loewen-Colón (00:55:13):

Do you need help catching up on today's topic, or do you want to learn more about the resources mentioned? If so, please check our website at podcast.doctrineofdiscovery.org for more information. Now, back to the conversation.

Tina Ngata ([00:55:31](#)):

The conquistadors really opposed *Sublimis Deus*, and their argument was that no, these tasks, these acts that we are taking out are fundamental to the work that we have to do on behalf of the Holy Roman Empire, on behalf of the monarchs of Europe. And so, they argued to have that, and I think it's really important for us to break it down what exactly it was that they were arguing for. They were arguing for the continuation of these acts of violence and dispossession. And so, within a year through the lobbying of Charles V, and through the lobbying of the conquistadors as well, they reversed it.

([00:56:24](#)):

They reversed it through nullifying the administrative document *Pastorale Officium*, but they also made very clear statements that everything that they said in *Pastorale Officium* which relates to and gives effect to *Sublimis Deus*, everything that they said in that document is null and void and basically undid it. It's so interesting that when people raise *Sublimis Deus*, they don't ever talk about the fact that within a year it was able to be effectively rescinded, when we have been working so long to get the papal bulls and the Doctrine of Discovery rescinded.

Philip P. Arnold ([00:57:07](#)):

Yeah, that's fascinating. It occurs to me just as you're talking and also reading your stuff, it occurs to me that they're met with a kind of peculiar challenge. There's forced conversion from 1493 with Cortés, 1519 into the 16th century for a long time. As you were saying, *Requerimento* is really convert or die kind of declaration that they read in a language that these Indigenous peoples probably don't understand. But that's kind of the first wave of colonialism. What happens, of course, I mean this is a standing question for me. I don't expect you to answer it, but what happens when you have to continually assault now Christian Indigenous people? Presumably they have been converted, so presumably they have been forcibly converted, either alive or dead I suppose, but they've been forcibly converted. So, now those 15th century documents of when you enter the lands of non-Christian people, those lands automatically are deeded to the Christian conquerors. So, what happens then when you're into the lands of these presumably Christian, I'll say in scare quotes, these Indigenous peoples who have been forcibly converted?

Tina Ngata ([00:58:55](#)):

And so, I think that's actually one of the strong arguments on our side in relation to the Doctrine of Discovery, that it was absolutely an economic project. Because even for those who were converted, the subjugation, the oppression, the dispossession never stopped. So, it was never actually about bringing people to Christ. It was always an economic project of extraction from Indigenous bodies and Indigenous lands and waters. That just happened to take the most legitimizing full force, which at the time was Christianity, and Christianity still holds a particular role within that. But over time, the process through which they would achieve this economic project, it also morphed and diversified and became very sophisticated. It took on the cloak of intellectualism, and we see that through the Age of Enlightenment. It took on the cloak of economics as well through the global economic order as well and international relations, and eventually jurisprudence as well.

([01:00:15](#)):

I think the fact that we do see that even post-conversion, our people were still oppressed, is actually testament to the fact that it was never actually about bringing the lost lambs back to the flock of God. It was always about extraction from us and from our lands, which they continued to carry out regardless. And then, I guess some of the other aspects to consider in that space is that what the Doctrine of Discovery did was that it wasn't just about extracting, it didn't just accord rights in relation to lands. It set a power structure in place. Christianity, of course, that power structure included divine power of God was the manifest destiny and the divine power of God, and then, the Vatican, and then the monarchs of Europe as the administrators of the laws of the Vatican.

(01:01:26):

But there was a very clear power structure which, and I often talk about, there's two kind of main tasks that they need to carry out in order to maintain this economic project. One is the setting up of a system so that you can protect the flow of privilege. They need to set a system and a structure up, and that comes of course with military force and all of the different things. And then, the second thing that they need to do is they need a narrative to legitimize the system that they set up. That's really important for us to remember, even for our Whānau who are converted, who do follow Christ. I do believe in religious freedom, so I believe it's choices who they follow and what their faith is.

(01:02:20):

But we have to remember that there are narratives in there around domination and who has the ultimate authority to make laws, and whose interests as well. And that it comes with a prescriptive view of the universe and our role in the universe in relation to each other, in relation to [inaudible 01:02:48] our planet and [inaudible 01:02:53] our Sky Father. And that's not something that can be isolatable. The Western European mindset is one that creates silos and categories with no crossover between them and they disconnected and it's inherently disconnected. I know at least for our way of approaching things, prayer is science, and science is prayer, which is also related to our [inaudible 01:03:25], our food.

(01:03:27):

We pray for our food and also our food is a science as well, and our songs, and our oratory, and our art, and how we name our babies, and how we form our families, and how we perceive. These are deeply interconnected practices, which through European intellectual theory has become siloed out. And so, I always call re-Indigenization and decolonization as a reconnective process. And a part of that reconnection is being able to identify and articulate the process of injustice that disconnected us from ourselves, from each other and from the universe around us, so that we can identify the sites of reconnection and where we need to place our energy and the approaches that we need to take as well. I'm not sure if that answered your question.

Philip P. Arnold (01:04:31):

I'm not sure it did, but that is a lovely way to conclude this conversation with you, Tina. I really appreciate you and all the efforts you undertook to be with us today. I think we'll have to have you back at some future time.

Tina Ngata (01:04:51):

I would love to sit and talk with you for hours. There's one thing I have to say, I first became aware of the Doctrine of Discovery through going to the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues and sitting at the feet of our Haudenosaunee relations, and hearing the amazing amount of work that you've done that myself and Tawera Tahuri, Pāpā Moana Jackson, who was my mentor throughout this, who delivered such a powerful panel and discussion at the 2012 Permanent Forum, who just passed away a few

months ago. We feel somewhat rudderless without him I guess to an extent. And so, I just wanted to thank you for all of the work that you have all done in that space, and especially our Haudenosaunee relations. We don't have outside of I would say a handful of us who have largely been mentored by Moana, we don't have many people to talk about the Doctrine of Discovery with, so I'm always in a workshop space and teaching about it to people who have never heard about it before. So, it's really exciting for me to sit with people who are experts, and discuss it with people who have their insights, and also be able to acknowledge the contributions that you've all made to this space, which we continue to benefit from. So, thank you so much all of you, Adam, Sandy, Phil, for the week that you do.

Sandy Bigtree ([01:06:19](#)):

Thank you, Tina.

Philip P. Arnold ([01:06:21](#)):

Thank you. Thank you. Brilliant work, and I'm sure we'll hear much more from you in the future. Thanks very much, and we'll look forward to meeting again soon. Our condolences on the loss of your mentor.

Tina Ngata ([01:06:40](#)):

Thank you.

Philip P. Arnold ([01:06:41](#)):

I had heard about that and I neglected to mention it at the beginning, but thank you for bringing it up.

Tina Ngata ([01:06:45](#)):

Yes, no problem. Thank you. We will be in touch soon, and I will send... I'm actually writing a piece on the Doctrine of Discovery in his tribute book. I've been asked to write the chapter on the Doctrine of Discovery for a book that's in tribute to him. I'm working on that at the moment, and I will get your article, the article over to you very soon as well. I'm working on that, and we'll touch base about the book that you're putting together as well.

Philip P. Arnold ([01:07:11](#)):

Right. I think we're officially done. But when you have you up, that's part of it. We need to strategize on what we can do with this grant and how we can make the biggest impact. Because it's not just you and your communities and nations down there that really don't know much about the Doctrine of Discovery. We've had all these repudiations by various Christian groups, denominations, a variety of different religious organizations have repudiated it, but still there's not much that people can draw on to educate their own constituencies. That's kind of what we're working on too. What would be most helpful? What kind of writing, what kind of little pieces would be most helpful to educate more and more people on how though it connects to their current issues that are facing them right now? When we have you here, we will strategize about all of that.

Tina Ngata ([01:08:27](#)):

I think it would be fantastic if we can have a gathering and sit there with our brothers and sisters from Africa, and sit there with their brothers and sisters from Australia, and Aotearoa. I think that would be really powerful.

Philip P. Arnold ([01:08:42](#)):

The UN is lovely, but it's just always such a pressure, such a pressured thing. We're thinking a conference would be much more, we'd have more time to talk about the real roots of this stuff. We might have a play. Someone has done a play called In the Courts of the Conqueror, a New York Indigenous man from New York, and we met with him, so we might bring that up. We're going to have an art show, maybe a concert. We'll have all this stuff to bring more attention. Nothing like the arts to bring more attention to these issues too.

Tina Ngata ([01:09:32](#)):

We have one of our performers here who has been getting very politicized. He's been putting out a lot of artwork and he's just recently released a song that makes reference to it, but he's also asked to sit with me so that he can learn more about it as well. Troy Kingi, we didn't get a chance to talk about the repudiation work that we are doing with the government at the moment.

Philip P. Arnold ([01:09:53](#)):

That's right.

Tina Ngata ([01:09:53](#)):

Which is really interesting that they're still at the table with us. The Crown Solicitor General is still at the table with us. Interesting back and forth that we are having with them. They started off with the old, "It's not relevant." And I said, "Excellent, so you can repudiate it and we can be out of here before lunchtime, because it doesn't make a difference, right? And they're like, "Well, hang on a second. We need do some deeper digging. We need to do some more research on it." I said, "Okay, then you go with these more research and figure out what side of the fence you're on, and then come back to us and see how it goes." But basically for us, either your presence and authority is derived through the treaty [inaudible 01:10:39], or it is derived through the application of the Doctrine of Discovery. You decide what you want the basis of your authority to be on and let us know.

([01:10:47](#)):

If it's going to be the Doctrine of Discovery, then just be upfront and say that. And if it's not, then it should be no problem at all to repudiate it and reject it completely. And so, that's the space that we are in at the moment, and they are figuring out how to respond to that. Particularly, we've grounded it as, because they're committed to a national action plan against racism, and that was a part of the findings of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Christchurch terrorism attacks. One of the recommendations was a national action plan against racism. And so, we've grounded that national action of racism, that non-negotiable is that they repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, because of its connections to our Muslim Islam relations who were present in those early papal bulls as well as Saracens.

([01:11:43](#)):

And so, we've been in deep discussions around the way in which religious racism and the Doctrine of Discovery has impacted us alongside our Muslim communities as well, which has been an interesting result of the Christchurch Royal Commission of Inquiry. And interesting actually, because the terrorist, I don't know if you've seen or heard, but he issued a manifesto. The manifesto is rife with crusade narratives. He talks about the crusades. He talks about what would the Pope do, ask yourself, what would the Pope do? He's got references, in twink liquid paper, drew references to the crusades on his gun that he used to shoot up the mosques. And so, it's rife with crusade references. And so, we've been

in some deep whakaakoako and deep learning spaces about that with our Muslim brothers and sisters. Very interesting space that we're in right now in Aotearoa, in discussions that have just been long overdue. Moana very excited about the fact that we're finally opening up these discussions now.

Philip P. Arnold ([01:13:05](#)):

That's what I find, conversations around the Doctrine of Discovery are very edifying. I mean, they're clarifying. I mean, yes, it's horrible. It's not fun, but it is really clarifying for everyone involved. You could look at the Age of Discovery as essentially a crusade, or trying to get to Jerusalem, get to their holy land by conquering the rest of the world. Essentially, that's what it's about. It's a continuation of the Crusades. That's why there are Saracens. They are Saracens and the enemies of Christ. I mean that's the language that is being utilized. It really is from the 11th century, it starts there and then it moves forward. Or you could say it starts in the fourth century.

Sandy Bigtree ([01:14:03](#)):

Yes, let's start there.

Philip P. Arnold ([01:14:04](#)):

At the beginning, the origins of the church with Constantine.

Sandy Bigtree ([01:14:08](#)):

Militarization.

Philip P. Arnold ([01:14:09](#)):

And so, it really is a long history that becomes current, urgent.

Sandy Bigtree ([01:14:18](#)):

But it's become the model of how we think about the world. Everybody, it's this...

Tina Ngata ([01:14:25](#)):

Yeah, it is.

Sandy Bigtree ([01:14:28](#)):

Supremacist way of thinking about everything.

Tina Ngata ([01:14:31](#)):

Yes, it is, and also, Moana used to remind me that, don't forget how ancient our ways are. Yes, it's been in place for a few hundred years now, but our ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating to each other and the universe has been around for millennia, millennia before that. A part of the colonial fiction is that it's intractable, and it tries to fool everybody that this is the natural order of the universe, that this is how it's meant to be. But actually, it's a blip on the radar compared to Indigenous law and Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating to each other. And so, it's absolutely retractable and it's absolutely something within our power to be able to overcome, but it starts with these discussions. And you're so right, Phil, my experience overarchingly is that it's a healing process.

([01:15:29](#)):

We talk about how healing journeys must begin with forums of truth. I've seen for so many people that it relieves us of that burden or that wound that says that our oppression is happenstance within this broader, apparently beneficent altruistic idea of spreading the word of God. But actually, no, there was intent. When you can identify and highlight that intent, you realize your oppression is not happenstance, that you're not just a byproduct, that actually what happened to you was intentional. And also, that there's nothing wrong inherently with you as an Indigenous person, that you were subjected to a process that many others were subjected to with an ends in mind. That's where you can really take a big step in the healing journey, decolonization healing journey. I totally see it as a healing process.

Philip P. Arnold ([01:16:29](#)):

I also think that what's being revealed now is how weak this way of operating is in the world, how unviable, or inviable, or something. How...

Sandy Bigtree ([01:16:49](#)):

Degenerative.

Philip P. Arnold ([01:16:50](#)):

How limited is in terms of giving our children a viable future. Where, as I say, Indigenous peoples had to have peace traditions around the world because they were in the same place for millennia for so long. They needed peace traditions. They weren't warring traditions as they're usually stereotyped as.

Tina Ngata ([01:17:20](#)):

That's right.

Sandy Bigtree ([01:17:21](#)):

It's written. And that's again, going back to the Doctrine of Discovery, because they had... The Jesuit relations, the Jesuits weren't only sending these reports back to the monarchs, they were publishing them as periodicals in France for the public to read.

Tina Ngata ([01:17:38](#)):

Wow.

Sandy Bigtree ([01:17:39](#)):

That's the history. Those are the primary sources that everyone's embracing their history on regarding the Haudenosaunee, and give me a break. I mean, you read...

Tina Ngata ([01:17:50](#)):

And what was happening with the records of Cook and his crew from the Endeavor that we were getting sent back to Europe? Those were being used as themes in brothels for these orgies, essentially. They were making pornographic periodicals out of the lascivious, promiscuous, dusky Pacific maiden trope. We became the subjects of early, well, not early, the earliest pornography is an ancient Rome, but of colonial pornography in Europe, which Voltaire used to engage in as well. There's records of him engaging in the discussions around our people in that way. But that's where you see, again, that's that objectifying of Indigenous women, and the turning us into these commodities. Which was also, you have a look even at some of those Elvis movies and the way that Hawaiian women are portrayed. The Tiki

Lounge, all of these things that we are these sexually accessible, dusky, South Sea maidens that can be taken and used while military men are taking R&R. All of that has a history back to Cook and his records and how they were represented in Europe as well. Very interesting. We could talk for days, couldn't we?

Philip P. Arnold ([01:19:28](#)):

Tina, how can students and others listen, connect and follow what you do?

Tina Ngata ([01:19:36](#)):

I have a blog site, which is tinangata.com, T-I-N-A-N-G-A-T-A.com, and a lot of my blog pieces and an archive are available on there. You can also download my book, Kia Mau: Resisting Colonial Fictions from my website there as well. You can also get that book on hard copy from Unity Bookshop in Wellington, New Zealand, and they ship internationally. I have a podcast, What a Load of Colony podcast on Spotify as well and iHeartRADIO, so you can access it there as well.

Jordan Loewen-Colón ([01:20:16](#)):

The producers of this podcast were Adam DJ Brett and Jordan Brady Loewen. Our intro and outro is Social Dancing music by Orris Edwards and Regis Cooks. This podcast has produced in collaboration with the Henry Foundation, Syracuse University, department of Religion, and the Indigenous Values Initiative.